



# News Release

## Arizona Department of Public Safety

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **DPS HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER** **BUSTS HUMAN SMUGGLER IN PHOENIX**

*It was the 5<sup>th</sup> “coyote” the officer has arrested in the last two months*

A simple traffic stop and great police work led to a human smuggler, commonly known as a “coyote”, being arrested by an Arizona Department of Public Safety Officer and a 17-year-old teenager being turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). On Tuesday April 24, 2007 at approximately 7 a.m., Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Officer Smith stopped a Chevrolet Suburban on I-10 near Buckeye Road for speeding. As Officer Smith neared the Suburban, he observed 14 people in the rear of the vehicle. Officer Smith removed the driver, 29-year-old Antonio Mendez, from the vehicle and learned that Mendez had picked up the Undocumented Aliens (UDAs) in Southern Arizona with orders to drive them to California.

When ICE Agents arrived on scene, they took custody of the 14 UDAs. Officer Smith booked Antonio Mendez for 14 counts of Human Smuggling. One of the UDAs was a 17-year-old teenager traveling with his older brother. This is the fifth “coyote” Officer Smith has arrested in the last two months on I-10.

“We continue to attack human smugglers and the organizations that traffic in human smuggling. Officer Smith represents the dedication demonstrated by all DPS employees and their pursuit to enforce human smuggling laws in Arizona. Officer Smith and officer assigned to I-10 will continue to make Interstate 10 a dangerous place for human smugglers who transport UDAs,” says Arizona Department of Public Safety Director Roger Vanderpool. DPS, as a major part of the Governor Napolitano’s Secure Arizona Initiative, is committed to dedicating all available recourses within DPS to address the problems presented by human smuggling in Arizona.

The mission of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the most dynamic state-level law enforcement agency in United, is to protect human life and property by enforcing state laws, deterring criminal activity, assuring highway and public safety and providing vital scientific, technical and operational support to other criminal justice agencies. The Department, also one of Arizona’s largest law enforcement agencies with some 2,200 sworn and civilian employees, consists of four divisions – Highway Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Criminal Justice Support and Agency Support. The Department is headquartered in Phoenix and has offices located in more than 30 communities within Arizona's 15 counties.